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THE TRAINING OF EXTENSION PERSONNEL TO MEET PRESENT-DAY PROBLEMS

(2) Undergraduate Preparation of the Home Demonstration Agent *

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The pattern of education now followed by home demonstration agents was sketched in its broad outlines with the establishment of the first curriculums in domestic economy, as the forerunner of present day home economics was termed. In 1873, when President John A. Anderson, of Kansas State College, first pronounced his plans for the new 5-year woman's course in domestic economy, and on through the months in which it took definite form, one of the basic concepts of the new educational plan was that it would provide for "making a life as well as making a living." To that end, the allotment of time among college courses was set up as one third of the time to general courses, such as rhetoric, literature, history and logic; one third to the tool courses, such as chemistry, mathematics, botany, and natural science; and one third to courses in the new field of domestic economy. It may be recalled that college courses in the early seventies did not hold to the completion of a 4-year high school course as an admission requirement. The 5-year course was inclusive of all preparation for the B.S. degree.

Today, the division of the student's time for the 4 years of high school and the 4 years of college will show that at least as much of her time is being spent in the study of "tool courses and general courses" as was stipulated in the beginning. Ample provision for general education is as old as the earliest traditions of home economics and continues as part of present-day plans for the undergraduate preparation of the home demonstration agents in those schools that have adhered to the early traditions of this field--which would include most, if not all, of the land-grant colleges and universities. Whether or not the tool courses are now taught as tool courses for persons not majoring in these various fields is a question which might well be considered by college administrators, along with the pertinent one as to whether or not the inclusion of "general courses" inevitably or even generally provides the desired general education. The first point to be stressed is that, inherent in the traditions and present plans for the undergraduate preparation of the home demonstration agent, is the concept that adequate allotment of hours should be made for such courses as would provide the contribution each college or university has been ready to make to the general education of home economics students along with its other students.

Certain of the objectives of general education phrased in the recent report of the President's Commission on Higher Education were included in the goals for the woman's course in domestic economy as planned in 1873-75, and hence for a long time, have been major points of focus in courses in home economics. Today,

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as in the early seventies, major contributions to general education are being made by schools and departments of home economics in that part of the educational plan directed toward these objectives:

- "1. To develop for the regulation of one's personal and civic life a code of behavior based on ethical principles consistent with democratic ideals.
- "2. To participate actively as an informed and responsible citizen in solving the social, economic, and political problems of one's community, State, and Nation.
- "3. To recognize the interdependence of the different peoples of the world and one's personal responsibility for fostering international understanding and peace.
- "4. To understand the common phenomena in one's physical environment, to apply habits of scientific thought to both personal and civic problems, and to appreciate the implications of scientific discoveries for human welfare.
- "5. To understand the ideas of others and to express one's own effectively.
- "6. To attain a satisfactory emotional and social adjustment.
- "7. To maintain and improve one's own health and to cooperate actively and intelligently in solving community health problems.
- "8. To understand and enjoy literature, art, music, and other cultural activities, as expressions of personal and social experience, and to participate to some extent in some form of creative activity.
- "9. To acquire the knowledge and attitudes basic to a satisfying family life.
- "10. To choose a socially useful and personally satisfying vocation that will permit one to use to the full one's particular interests and abilities.
- "11. To acquire and use the skills and habits involved in critical and constructive thinking."

Similar recognition was not, and still is not commonly shown in the educational planning of schools of arts and sciences during these decades. Acceptance of the contribution to general education now offered by courses external to schools of liberal arts seems essential if a fair concept is to be formed of the present effectiveness of efforts toward general education.

The second characteristic--the plan for woman's education announced by the promulgator of the first curriculum in domestic economy in the seventies was the statement that the objectives of woman's education differed in certain important regards from those accepted for men. President Anderson termed the new curriculum in domestic economy "precisely fitted to meet woman's needs." The certainties which he felt as to what these needs are is not reflected by our present-day

educational leaders serving on the President's Commission on Higher Education. Their statement implies that there are differences, but what these are or the way in which they influence the general education deemed desirable is not revealed. They state tersely, and perhaps grimly, that "The education of women is a subject with which college administrators must cope." The definition of "cope" is given as "to treat fairly, justly and equitably" which makes their statement reassuring, if not enlightening! Home economists hold that woman's role in our society offers important clues as to additional objectives deserving consideration in her general education. The statement of Mary Beard as to woman's concern in any society is right to the point. She says, "Woman has always been acting and thinking, intuitively and rationally for weal or for woe, at the center of life--where operations are carried on for the care and protection of life or where this fundamental cultural responsibility is discarded in pursuit of self-interest. If there is in all history any primordial force, that force is woman--continuer, protector, preserver of life." She continues, "What woman conceives her role to be, if any at all, and how she regards civilization become as important to the continuance of quality of civilization as are her activities in every department of society and economy."

Anthropologists tell us that women have a strong sense of meaning and relatedness; that men have strong urges to exploration by land and sea and air and in the realms of matter and mind and also a desire for mastery sometimes manifest as aggression and war. If we can accept the fact that men and women are different, we may be able to provide equivalent but not identical educational opportunity without the hurtful and unfair discount involved in the use of such terms as "emasculated courses" or "all right for women."

The focus of the core curriculum in home economics is placed on the needs of woman as woman, the conserver for society. If the home demonstration agent is a woman who expects to work with women, such a focus in her educational experiences is vastly important.

The third point to be presented for your consideration is that the home demonstration agent expects to hold professional status as a home economist. This necessitates the inclusion of advanced work in several lines of home economics through which she may attain the mastery of basic subject matter, understanding, and insight of the attitudes and appreciations expected to characterize a home economist.

The fourth point is that extension education is education—not personal services to individual families. The curriculum must provide that background in education necessary for professional status in this field. These will be different in part from the course pursued by teachers, yet will share in common objectives and goals. Psychology, social psychology, methods of home economics, and the study of how we learn are essential.

The fifth point is that the home-demonstration-agent-to-be must be prepared for the unique field of extension education. The goals sought for this phase of her education have been so fully detailed in the recent publication as to require little further discussion, especially by someone whose extension background has become outdated, hoary with the passage of years. However,

surely there should be courses in extension philosophy, history, and administration and a specific course in extension methods in home economics. The first of these courses may be advantageously taken in classes offered for all extension workers; the second should be applied specifically to the subject matter field of home economics and be taught by a well-equipped member of the home economics extension staff. Preprofessional experience in the field is highly desirable, as is also an internship of at least 6 months planned and directed toward successful orientation to extension work.

The sixth point is that the preparation of a home demonstration agent might well include a survey course in agriculture of perhaps three or four credit hours to contribute to her perspective of the total problem of rural families. Likewise, but outside my subject, the preparation of an agricultural agent could advantageously include three or four credit hours of home economics directed toward developing some understanding and appreciation of the problems involved in satisfying home and family living. Lacking such background on the part of key personnel, it is quite possible that the Extension Service may find its stated concern with families and family life wholly overlooked by agricultural agents who are well prepared to direct farmers in their efforts.

"To grow more corn,
To feed more pigs,
To buy more land,
To grow more corn"

and so on and on, and yet are totally unable to contribute significantly to the great goal of enriched family life.

Courses in citizenship, sociology, economics, and ethics are increasingly recognized as meriting inclusion in the college preparation of men and women preparing for professional participation in the extension services.

Over and above whatever subject matter these students of ours study, it matters greatly that their total college experience shall be integrated; that all courses within and without the field of specialization shall contribute to the end that each individual shall have broad and mature interests, social rather than selfish attitudes, that they be able to recognize and relate meanings, and that they shall remain eager to have life be a continuing educational experience and to find continuing satisfaction in the contribution they make to their profession.